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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR DECEMBER 16, 2004

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for December 16, 2004. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

EVRENSEL: A case has been opened against five students of Dicle University's Faculty of Education in Siirt. The students were wearing badges reading "No to Prosecutions (Investigations)," in protest of the charges brought against 30 students who (allegedly) demonstrated against YOK (Higher Education Board) policies on November 6.

CUMHURİYET / OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: Ozdemir Ozok, head of the Turkish Bar Association, called for a fair judicial process to reveal the truth about the killing of Ahmet Kaymaz and his son. Ozok added that the Union of Turkish Bar Associations would assign someone to observe the process until its conclusion. Ozkok's written announcement stated that his organization generated its own report about the Kiziltepe incident, by means of interviews with authorities, residents, and the victims' family, but that the case file's being classified as secret hindered the report.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Diyarbakir Prosecutor Erkan Ozcan voiced his opinion on the lawsuit brought against 72 security officers who (allegedly) killed 10 prisoners and wounded 23 prisoners at the Diyarbakir jail. (Note: the trial of these officers has been ongoing for 8 years, and the case has since been taken to the European Court of Human Rights. End note.) The prosecutor (reportedly) asked that the charges against some of the officers be dropped due to statute of limitations, and that the sentences of some of the officers be decreased to four years on the grounds that the officers were performing their duties, and acting in self-defense.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Members of DEHAP's Youth Branches initiated a campaign with the title "Yes to differences, No to separatism." In support of the campaign, members have collected thousands of petitions from Diyarbakir, the Aegean Region, Mardin and Mersin since December 6, which they will send to the Turkish Parliament today. Erkan Tas, the spokesperson of DEHAP Youth Branches, said his group is asking that the 3rd, 42nd, and 66th articles of the Constitution be amended. (Note: the third article states that the language of the Turkish state is Turkish; the 42nd addresses education issues, and the 66th state that "everyone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk." End note).

YENI SAFAK: Bingol Municipality's Press and Public Relations Directorate established a special desk to foster better communication between citizens and the Municipality. Through the so-called "White Desk," the Municipality aims to provide better service to the people of Bingol.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

1. EVRENSEL: Negotiations between the Gaziantep Municipality and the 1200 workers of GASKI (Gaziantep Waterworks and Sewage System) are ongoing, and the parties have agreed on 17 of 83 items in a draft agreement. The union is seeking a 50 percent gross increase in pay for 2005.

2. TERCUMAN / HURRIYET / YENI SAFAK / RADIKAL / OZGUR GUNDEM: Northern and eastern regions of Turkey are under heavy snowfall. The weather conditions make life difficult, rendering transportation impossible and causing water and electricity infrastructure to fail. Due to unexpected and early snowfall in Haskoy, Mus, farmers are trying to plant wheat in negative 25 degree Celsius on fields that are covered with snow.

3. EVRENSEL: Nearly 300 producers of citrus fruit demonstrated in Samandag, Antakya province, to protest the prices the government is offering for their produce. The producers criticized the government's economic policies, claiming the economy is managed through World Bank, IMF and WTO directives.

4. OZGUR GUNDEM: Sanliurfa's Directorate of Environment and Forestry is launching one of Turkey's biggest forestation projects in Halfeti, where four types of trees will be planted on an area covering 82 hectares.

5. CUMHURİYET: Cultivation of fields in the Cukurova region

is declining. Today, fewer fields are being planted and finding workers to work the existing cotton fields is sometimes difficult. Ali Ergezer, the head of the Chamber of Agriculture in Tarsus, expressed dissatisfaction with the prices for cotton offered by the state, especially compared to the relatively higher prices offered in other countries. (Note: In this highly protected economy growers are as attuned to state monopoly prices as to any market index prices. End note).

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